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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)  
SUBJECT: GEORGIA DENIES FLYING DRONES IN ABKHAZIA

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D

¶1. (C) De facto Abkhaz authorities have publicly accused Georgia of flying unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) over Abkhazia on July 7. The de facto foreign ministry claims that two Georgian UAVs flew over the village of Saberio in Gali district and Khukhun in Tkvarcheli district. The Georgian MFA issued a statement saying that these reports are "pure disinformation aimed at misleading the international community" and accused the Russian side of increasing their own flights of UAVs in Georgia. The MFA also used the opportunity to highlight the need for a strong international monitoring mission with access to all of Georgia. At dinner on July 8, both the Minister of Defense Vasil Sikharulidze and Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Nalbandov stressed to the Ambassador that the Abkhaz claims were completely false and that Georgian planes had not overflowed Abkhazia. Sikharulidze added that he had received a preliminary report of a Russian UAV sighted by Georgian armed forces flying over the town of Khoni earlier in the day.

¶2. (C) The EUMM noted at a weekly brief on July 9 that, since mid-June, there has been an increase in the number of reports of UAV flights by both sides. The monitors are physically unable to assess if the Abkhaz claims are true, however, because they have no access to Abkhazia. While they have not yet observed Russian UAVs within Georgia, monitors will be stationed along the administrative boundary line at about 21:00 each evening to watch for them.

¶3. (C) Comment. With the Russian veto of UNOMIG monitoring operations in Abkhazia and a continued denial of EUMM access to Abkhazia, such claims can no longer be either verified or refuted. All sides can make these types of accusations regarding incidents in the disputed territories secure in the knowledge that there are no observers present to disprove them. Such allegations will only build upon an already tense situation, and the necessity of unhindered access for the EUMM to be able to confirm or deny charges will become even more vital. End comment.  
TEFFT